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DAVID CHRIST

14 August 1961

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MEMORANDUM FOR: THE RECORD

SUBJECT : Mrs. Christ's Knowledge of the Cuban Operation

The day after her husband's arrest, 16 September 1960, Mrs. Christ and her brother-in-law, Lawrence Christ, were briefed as to the reasons why Mr. Christ was sent to Cuba and provided with an outline of the operation.

Mrs. Christ had very little knowledge of the functions or activities performed by her husband and was not aware of his experience in the audio surveillance field. Therefore, terms such as cover, security and audio surveillance were relatively new to her.

Mrs. Christ was advised that her husband was Chief of the Audio Operations Branch and that this branch services all requests within the organization for the surreptitious installation of microphones and other listening devices. She was told that members of this branch, including her husband, are required to perform dangerous missions on a world wide basis. Mrs. Christ was astonished to learn that her husband's mission in Havana was clandestine and dangerous. She knew that the technicians were requested to place audio surveillance equipment in offices which were scheduled for occupancy by the New Chinese News Agency. Mrs. Christ was told that her husband, two other employees of the organization, a State Department employee and an agent were apprehended by the Cuban G-2. She was told that the State Department employee, (Robert Neet)06 who was released by the Cuban Government, was actually the (case officer under State Department cover). Although the name of the agent (Nordie)04 was not mentioned at this time, Mrs. Christ read about him in various newspaper accounts at the time of the trial. Mrs. Christ was also told that the operational knowledge that her husband possesses, if disclosed to the Cubans, would not only cause considerable damage to the United States Government, but would also lead to intensive and probably brutal interrogation of her husband by the Cubans and probably the Russians as well. She was not advised of other operations involving her husband.

Mrs. Christ was given as much information as possible about Mr. Christ's cover story. He was employed by a cover organization, Vacheta Associates, located in New York City and had been provided with alias documentation, such as a driver's license and a social security card. Mrs. Christ understood the reasons for this cover and why it was easier for her husband to pose as a bachelor than to admit the existence of a family. At no time have the movements or activities of the imprisoned technicians, prior to their arrest, been discussed with Mrs. Christ. Mrs. Christ was informed

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that in the event of danger the technicians planned to escape to an apartment which was occupied by an unwitting State Department secretary.

Since the initial briefing, Mrs. Christ has gradually picked up additional information, mostly from newspaper articles, about the operation and subsequent trial. It is believed that Mrs. Christ has not obtained any substantiative information about the operation other than what is mentioned in this memorandum. At the present time, she does not seem too interested in the operational aspect of the case, nor the reasons for her husband's capture. At the time of the trial, what little publicity appeared in the newspapers had been previously discussed with Mrs. Christ. She knows that the agent ([illegible]) returned to Washington, D.C., but she was instructed not to ask any questions about his release nor his present whereabouts.

Mrs. Christ was informed that Mr. Kessler, who was the Department of State Welfare Officer in Havana at the time of the technicians arrest, had contacted the prisoners shortly after their arrest. She was told that Mr. Kessler was witting of the technicians true identity and was able to verbally transmit brief messages to them from their families. Mrs. Christ sent one message through Kessler to her husband, prior to the severance of diplomatic relations. She was also aware of Kessler's activities in behalf of the technicians and knows that he supplied them with spending money, vitamins, cigars, candy and other items as requested. She was told that Kessler hired Dr. Colomar, a Cuban National, to serve as the technicians attorney. In May 1961, Kessler visited Washington, D.C. on official business and met Mrs. Christ on two occasions in the presence of other Government employees.

Mrs. Christ also knows that Dr. Colomar left Havana with his wife in June 1961 and has been brought to Washington, D.C. for consultation with Government personnel. She has been told that another Cuban attorney was hired by Dr. Colomar to represent the technicians and handle the case when the appeal is heard. It was not intended that Mrs. Christ should know about the Washington attorney, Mr. Murphy, but she appears to be acquainted with the name.

Mrs. Christ has learned from newspaper articles that there are about 20 American prisoners at the Isle of Pines and that conditions at the prison are extremely poor. She also knows that food is brought to the technicians by a Cuban woman whose son occupies a cell with the technicians. She was advised that Dr. Colomar saw the technicians a few days prior to his departure, that they were in good spirits and that Mr. Christ occasionally worked in the prison.

Insofar as knowledge of specific operations originated by the organization to obtain her husband's release, Mrs. Christ now knows of

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only one direct approach. She was told that the American attorney offered to exchange medical supplies for the freedom of the three technicians and that the offer was never acted upon by the Cubans. She also knows that we have tried several other unsuccessful operations, but she is unaware of any details of these attempts. Mrs. Christ is not aware of the operation now in progress, which contemplates utilizing personnel in Mexico. On several occasions when the organization seriously considered a given operation, Mrs. Christ, by coincidence, has had similar ideas. For example, when Castro proposed exchanging tractors for prisoners, Mrs. Christ continually questioned us as to what action was under way to include the technicians in any exchange. She also had numerous ideas as to how this should be carried out. Yet, she could only be told that the negotiations were being closely monitored and that there would be no interference in behalf of her husband, unless the political climate was favorable.

As the Cuban-American political atmosphere changes and specific acts occur, such as the hi-jacking of U. S. airplanes, Mrs. Christ gets new ideas or approaches regarding the means we might use to obtain the release of her husband. Of course, about the same time, we are usually considering a similar possibility.

Mrs. Christ has been verbally advised of the contents of the messages we have exchanged with the technicians and knows that the Swiss have been unable to visit them. She knows that over 1000 pesos was left by Mr. Coleman with the Swiss and that this amount is being supplemented through Berne. She also knows that we recently cabled the Swiss Embassy in Havana regarding the receipt of packages and that the packages which we sent to the technicians were not received by the Swiss, and therefore, no further packages will be sent.

The operational details which have been discussed with Gen. Taylor but not with Mrs. Christ are of such a nature that little damage would be done if they were inadvertently revealed to Mrs. Christ. The main points which should not be discussed with her are:

1. The name of the Washington attorney handling the case.

2. Details of present or future operations designed to effect the release of the men.